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Civilian Personnel

A Supervisor's Guide to Filling Job Vacancies

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SUMMARY of CHANGE

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A Supervisor's Guide to Filling Job Vacancies

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INTRODUCTION

As a supervisor or manager for the Department of the Army, you may have found that filling your job vacancies in a timely manner with capable employees is one of your greatest challenges. This pamphlet is designed to assist you in matching your job requirements to the skills available in the labor market. It should help you comply with equal employment opportunity and labor relations laws and the many technical requirements of hiring a Federal employee.

This pamphlet tells you about some of the most commonly used sources of candidates. When considering these sources, you should keep your affirmative action responsibilities clearly in mind, especially if you are filling a job in a class which is underrepresented by Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) standards. Your civilian personnel office (CPO) representative or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (EEOO) can tell you if underrepresentation exists. They can also advise you on what recruitment strategies have the best track record for attracting individuals from underrepresented groups.

The CPO representative who helps you fill your jobs will find answers to your questions and advise you on carrying out your role in the process. Remember, though, that filling jobs is a line, not a staff, function. This means that even though the CPO staff can advise and assist you, YOU are ultimately responsible for making the key decisions. These decisions include, for example:

- Whether a need exists for the job.
- What job requirements you have, and whether they can be “engineered” to a lower grade to enhance recruitment.
- The potential sources (unless mandatory or priority placement occurs) of candidates.
- Who will be selected.

This pamphlet should help you expand your thinking about where Army employees come from. It should be used as a ready reference, but always with the knowledge that more detailed information is available in the CPO.

Civilian Personnel

A Supervisor's Guide to Filling Job Vacancies

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Chapter 1

Prior to Fill: Management Considerations

1-1. The Manpower Staffing Standards System



Within the Department of the Army (DA), we use specific systems to determine the numbers and types of employees needed to accomplish an organization's work. The Manpower Staffing Standards System (MS3) is a guide to be used for determining work load data. This MS3 is based largely on past experience at the work site. Applying a formula, we establish numbers of employees per organization. MS3 is flexible and makes allowances for special situations that bring extra work to an activity. These situations are referred to as "uniques." In addition to MS3 (which doesn't cover all types of jobs or all types of Army organizations), there are other resource requirement determination processes.

Most of these use various “yardsticks,” or staffing guides to establish the number of personnel hours needed to perform your work.

1–2. Establishing a personnel standard

a. You may be asked to provide information to be used for setting up a personnel standard to measure the work load at your own work site. The better statistics you keep, the better able you will be to justify the employees you need. Management analysts are available to help you in this process.

b. Recently, increasing emphasis has been placed on accountability for managing and responsibility for being informed of the flexibility in order to determine the kinds and numbers of employees needed to accomplish a mission. In other words, managers are held accountable for doing just that - managing.

1–3. Determining the type of employees needed

a. In addition to the basic number of employees you need for your work load, you will have other well-reasoned decisions to make. For example, do you need all full-time workers? Or can you “spend” your allotted resources more efficiently with some part-time employees or intermittent (previously called “When Actually Employed”) workers? Here, the results of your personnel standard can tell you how many employee years of work you have in your outfit. You may use this, along with your own knowledge of peaks and valleys in your activity, as a measure to help you decide what kind of employees you need.

(1) Seasonal employees. Perhaps the best “fit” for your organization are seasonal employees. This applies if you can reasonably predict the times of the year when your work requirements will begin and end. For example, tractor operators to mow grass or roof and road repair crews. On-call employment is another option, and is appropriate where work load might grow unexpectedly, such as certain repair functions within the Army Materiel Command depots.

(2) Job sharing. Job sharing is an alternative to full-time employment. This is an option you can use, if you choose. It usually means that two part-time employees share one position; e.g., 20 hours each per week. Generally, some overlap is necessary for the employees to brief each other on the work status. Job sharing is actually another form of part-time employment.

(3) Job splitting. If you have enough work for one additional position, but the position would be composed of high-grade and lower-grade work, you might consider a technique called “job splitting.” In this case, you set up two part-time jobs, but they are not identical as in job sharing. Assume, for example, that you have 1 year’s worth of work. Although all work is budget related, 60 percent is typical of a GS-9 budget analyst (determining overhead charges to be passed along; identifying and reporting costs trends; recommending adjustments), and 40 percent is typical of a GS-4 budget clerk (recording transactions; extracting information for use by the budget analyst; notifying the budget analyst of overages or shortages). You could establish a budget analyst to work 24 hours per week and a budget clerk to work 16 hours per week.

b. Like most managers, you probably prefer permanent and few, if any temporary subordinates. However, temporary employees provide a cost-effective element of the work force. Further, these employees are as well-qualified as their permanent counterparts. To you as a manager, there are special assets associated with temporary employees, as they may be released without the advance notice required for permanent workers. Since procedures for hiring temporaries may vary by location, managers are encouraged to contact their local Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) for guidance.

1–4. Management principles for job vacancies

a. As a good manager, you should work hard to get more for your salary dollars. Representatives from your CPO can assist you in applying position management principles. For example, structure your vacant jobs so that the highest level work is concentrated in the fewest number of positions. Keep a good mix of journeymen to sub-journeymen and professionals to technicians and clerks. Fill vacant jobs at less than full performance level when you can; then you can provide for upward mobility; expand your recruiting base and save salary dollars.

b. Managers are faced with an almost bewildering variety of placement options when trying to fill a vacancy. In the pages that follow, we will walk you through the three basic selection areas: special placement programs where the selection is nondiscretionary; candidates from DA; and non-Army candidates where you have more latitude in selection.

Chapter 2 Special Placements

2-1. Selecting the candidates

After you have decided on the type of vacancy to be filled, a CPO representative will work with you to decide where to choose your candidates. Sometimes you will consider a special placement candidate prior to candidates from other sources; some of these placements are nondiscretionary. Your CPO representative will make sure that the names of candidates eligible for special, early consideration are referred to you. They can also give you specifics on options you may have. Special candidates (not listed in order of priority) include—

a. Reemployment priority lists. On this list are former employees who had been separated from their jobs because of compensable injury or disability (i.e., they are receiving workers' compensation). Also, the list contains the names of former permanent employees who lost employment due to reduction in force (RIF).

b. Repromotion eligibles. Employees who have been reduced in grade through no fault of their own are usually given special consideration for higher-grade jobs up to the grade they previously held. While you generally are not required to select repromotion eligibles referred for your consideration, you sometimes must provide bona fide reasons if you do not do so. These candidates have demonstrated their ability and should receive your serious consideration.

c. Employees facing Reduction-In-Force (RIF). Employees at your installation or Army activity who are being (or are due to be) affected by RIF are also given special referrals to vacancies. This is in keeping with DA policy that although vacancies need not be used in RIF, they should be used to the fullest possible extent to provide placement opportunities to employees who would otherwise be affected adversely because of RIF. Procedures vary within different Army activities. Usually, if you have a vacancy for which an employee facing separation or demotion because of RIF is qualified, you will be required to accept that employee.

d. Priority Consideration Eligibles. Sometimes, employees are entitled to receive consideration for job vacancies ahead of others. This is usually because they "lost" consideration sometime previously (e.g., because of CPO or management error). Other times, this is afforded as resolution to EEO complaints or grievances. Generally, you may select or not select these individuals after fully considering them.

e. Medical reassignment eligibles. Employees who are unable to continue in their current jobs for medical reasons may be considered for other vacancies for which they qualify and which they are physically able to do. Your CPO will have set up procedures to assist these employees. You might view this as a preventive program. If an employee loses his or her job due to medical reasons, he or she may end up on a Reemployment Priority List as discussed above.

f. Overseas returnees. DA employees who accept overseas assignments have rights (upon their return) to the position they left at their last CONUS installation. This means they return to the same position in the U.S. if it still exists. If it does not, they are entitled to a vacant job for which they are qualified and available—one which is in the same geographic area as they left, and one which has the same pay and benefits.

g. DOD Priority Placement Program (PPP). Most supervisors and managers have had some experience with or have at least heard of the "stopper" list. This is a list of employees who have priority for vacant positions. This program is an excellent means of providing jobs for Department of Defense employees who experience involuntary adverse personnel actions. It is often cited as a model within the government.

(1) The PPP is more restrictive than most of the other special placements mentioned here, especially if there is a candidate for your vacancy on the "stopper" who is a priority 1, 2, or 3 registrant. The presence of qualified, available PPP registrants in these higher priorities preclude (with some few exceptions) filling your vacancy from other sources, internal or external to DA. The presence of priority 4 and 5 registrants stops you from making appointments or transfers of employees from outside DA.

(2) The different priorities are established based on the severity of the personnel actions faced by the employees. For example, a priority 1 employee may be scheduled for a RIF separation; a priority 5 may be an overseas returnee where reemployment rights are to a lower grade position than he or she permanently holds. Also registered in the PPP as priority 5 are DA-employed family members of DA military or civilian personnel serving on a career or career-conditional appointment when these family members are compelled to move because of their sponsors' permanent change of station. This program helps to ease the pressure of frequent assignment changes among military and civilian families.

h. Displaced Employee Program (DEP). This system is Government-wide, and only becomes a possibility if you elect to consider candidates from a register administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or by the Army under special authority. DEP eligibles have either received a RIF separation notice from their agencies (because the agencies were unable to place the employees in another position) or they have declined to transfer with their function to another commuting area. You must give bona fide consideration to these employees before you may consider other candidates from the register.

i. Military Family Act of 1985. This Act provides hiring preference to spouses of members of the Armed Forces for certain positions in the Department of Defense, if they are among the best qualified. This means that available spouse preference eligibles must be selected before other candidates on a referral list.

2-2. Reviewing the candidates' qualifications

At times, you may be pleasantly surprised or somewhat dismayed by the requirement to review candidates through a program you had never planned to tap. Do, however, keep an open mind about the employees or former employees you discover through these programs. Remember that, in all cases, the employees must be qualified for and able to perform your job. If a qualification decision appears to you to have been made in error, you may voice your concern and receive a review of it. Experience has shown that different supervisors' and managers' viewpoints on programs such as these vary according to their own experiences. That is, those who have themselves been affected by RIF, transfer of function, are much more apt to look kindly on systems which accommodate employees in those circumstances. If you give these candidates a chance to demonstrate their ability to perform your work, you will almost surely find that their capabilities are proven and that they have a wealth of transferable skills.

Chapter 3

Candidates from the Department of the Army

Your position is approved, described, and graded, and all special placements have been cleared. Where do you turn to find qualified candidates? After consulting with your CPO representative, you may decide to look at DA employees first. The way you will do this depends on the grade and nature of your vacant job, and on the speed with which you must fill it. It is important to remember that, with any of these avenues, you have the privilege to select or not to select. At any point in the process (unless you are constrained by local union negotiated procedures), you may elect to consider candidates from a different source than originally used.

a. Career program referrals. Usually, for higher grade positions in career programs, you will consider candidates from a career referral list. Examples of these types of positions are budget officer or deputy facility engineer. These referrals (or lists of candidates) come from your major command or from HQDA through your local CPO. Many—perhaps all—of these contenders for your job will be from other Army installations or activities. Some may be from other agencies, or they may be eligible for reemployment based upon previous Federal service. While career referrals are an excellent source of candidates, you may elect, instead, to use another source, such as an OPM register. If you wish to consider Army promotion candidates, you must use career referral procedures. Managers are not required to interview any or all individuals listed on career program referrals.

b. Local procedures. For many positions, programs run by your local CPO will produce a reasonable number of high quality DA candidates. Examples of these positions are carpenter foreman, firefighter leader, library technician, and military personnel technician. Local procedures where DA candidates may be considered are especially appropriate for administrative, technical, substantive clerical, or trades positions where prior experience in your (or a similar DA) organization qualifies a candidate for promotion.

(1) The best known local procedure is the merit promotion program. If you do not already have a copy of your local merit promotion plan, which spells out your merit promotion procedures, obtain one from your CPO. While these procedures vary considerably from one activity to another, you can count on this:

(a) Your vacancy usually will be advertised. It may already be covered under an open continuous announcement or an announcement may be developed specifically for your vacancy.

(b) Interested employees must apply in order to be considered.

(c) Staff members of the local CPO (often assisted by subject-matter experts) will rate and rank these applicants to determine a best qualified group from which you may select.

(d) You will be provided a list of one or more best qualified candidates. You may select any of these individuals by following local procedures.

(2) All merit promotion candidates will not be necessarily at a lower grade than the grade of your vacancy. Some may be reassignment candidates who used merit promotion procedures to attempt to enter another field. Others may presently hold a higher grade than your vacancy and are interested in your job because of possible-or documented-promotion potential or personal wish to change career fields or geographic location.

(3) Merit promotion procedures are competitive. Candidates apply for the vacancy and then vie with each other for a place on the referral list and for the job itself. You should refer to your local merit promotion plan and discuss with the servicing staffing specialist when you must, may or cannot use merit promotion procedures. One example of where you might need advice is when you are filling a trainee position and plan to promote noncompetitively later, or when you are making a temporary promotion which you may later wish to make permanent.

(4) Your CPO may offer other procedures for considering Army candidates noncompetitively, such as through reassignment, or by offering you a choice of current DA employees who are on leave without pay from their sponsor's last duty station.

Chapter 4

Non-Army Candidates

4-1. Sources

Other possible sources for your vacancy can be divided roughly into three groups: Those who are seeking competitive appointments (probably first-time Government jobs) from a register; those who currently work or previously worked for the Federal government; and those who are eligible to work for the Federal government because of a special noncompetitive authority.

4-2. Registers

Most Federal employees were appointed from a competitive register for their first permanent jobs. If you are one of these, you are somewhat familiar with the process.

a. Registers are lists of eligible “outside” job candidates who usually have no prior Federal service. They may be local, regional, or national. Registers might be for one type of job and grade level, or for many different types of jobs at different grades. For example, you might fill a guidance counselor vacancy with a candidate from a register administered nationwide. On the other hand, you might fill a wage grade vacancy with a candidate from a register developed locally—perhaps even maintained by your own local CPO,

b. Regardless of whether a register is “run” by your servicing CPO or by the central personnel agency (U.S. Office of Personnel Management), the procedures followed for hiring are basically the same.

(1) First, the job or jobs will be announced in order to invite qualified persons to apply.

(2) Next, applicants are screened for minimum civil service qualifications. Those meeting minimum requirements are considered eligible. They are rated based on their relative qualifications; this rating takes into account experience, training, education, or test scores—or a combination of these. Each eligible candidate receives a score from 70 to 100, which can be augmented by any additional points for veterans’ preference.

(3) Those eligible candidates who have veterans’ preference have points added to their ratings. Generally, disabled veterans (and certain other candidates whose preference is derived from the veteran status of a deceased or disabled veteran) receive 10 points. Non-disabled veterans receive five points.

(4) Candidates are placed on registers in the order of their ratings. Exceptions are Displaced Federal Employees and disabled veterans who receive disability compensation. They are placed at the top of the register for most positions.

c. When you want to consider candidates from a register for your vacancy, tell this to your CPO representative. Perhaps a register for that type of position has already been set up; if so, you should receive a referral of candidates quickly. If a register must be established, you may be asked to help identify those characteristics that a successful candidate would possess. These characteristics must relate to the duties of the position. They will form the basis for the rating process.

d. You will receive a list of eligible candidates from the register. For each vacancy, you may select any one of the top three available candidates. However, you may not pass over a veteran to select a lower ranking nonveteran unless you receive prior approval to do so. Your CPO representative should send you a list with only the names of candidates whom you can appropriately select.

4-3. Current or former Federal Employees

a. Current employees of other Federal agencies (e.g., Department of the Air Force, Veterans Administration) may transfer to your vacancy. This can be done noncompetitively if your vacancy is the same or a lower grade than the candidate’s current job, and has no higher potential. The advantage of noncompetitive placements is the speed with which they may be accomplished.

b. A noncompetitive placement can be made for a former Federal employee (called a “reinstatement eligible”) if your vacancy is the same or a lower grade than the candidate’s last Federal job. Generally, you must use competitive procedures for both current Federal employees as well as reinstatement eligibles if they are being considered for a higher grade than currently or last held.

4-4. Special authorities

Your vacancy is probably a permanent job in the competitive service. Several special avenues for recruiting candidates are in the excepted service, or begin with temporary appointments. These often lead to conversions to competitive service and permanent conversions if the employees perform successfully for certain time periods. These special programs allow deserving members of the public to obtain employment, and often allow you to fill your job quickly.

a. Veterans Readjustment Appointments (VRA). This excepted service program is open to veterans who served during the Vietnam era and who meet certain other requirements. Check with your CPO to determine if this program can be used to fill your vacancy. You will be expected to help prepare a training plan for your new VRA employee. This usually consists primarily of on-the-job training, but does not have to. After two years, you will decide whether the veteran should be converted to the competitive service. This is based on your determination whether she or he has performed successfully in your position.

b. Appointment of Disabled Veterans (DVs). Disabled veterans with military service or VA-rated disabilities of 30 percent or more may be placed noncompetitively in any competitive service position in your organization for which they qualify. They may be hired only on temporary appointments intended to last more than 60 days; however, they may be converted to career-conditional appointments at any time after they begin work (e.g., after only one day).

c. Appointment of the handicapped. You may hire a physically handicapped applicant either on a temporary or permanent basis, noncompetitively. If you elect the temporary route, and find that the employee is successful in his or her new job, you may request conversion of the employee to a permanent expected service appointment. Then, after 2 years' service, the employee may be converted to the competitive service. Your CPO representative can help you determine whether your vacant job is one which is adaptable for fill by handicapped workers. If job or work site modifications are required, you may receive advice on how to accomplish this.

d. Interns.

(1) Professional and Administrative Career (PAC) Entry Level Developmental Positions. If your vacancy is for a PAC developmental position such as Supply Specialist, GS-5, or Budget Analyst GS-7, you may choose to fill the job through local merit promotion procedures. Then subsequent promotions to the target grade may be made without further competition. If, however, you wish to hire an external non status candidate such as a recent college graduate for your job, you must use a special excepted service hiring authority, known as Schedule B-PAC to do so. This authority allows your civilian personnel office to recruit directly for qualified candidates at colleges and universities. Your CPO representative will help you with the proper procedures such as assuring that rules of veterans' preference are followed. Also priority candidates such as repromotion eligibles and those from the DEP must be considered before a nonstatus external candidate may be hired.

(2) Other entry level developmental positions. If your vacancy is for a non-PAC entry level developmental position such as Accountant/Auditor, Education Specialist, Engineer, Librarian, etc., you may elect to fill the job through internal sources, i.e., under local merit promotion procedures, or through external sources, using a register administered by OPM or by the Army under special authority. Subsequent promotions of employees selected for non-PAC developmental positions to the target grade may be made without further competition.

e. Employment of former overseas family members, E.O. 12362 and E.O. 12585. Another source of candidates are former overseas local hire employees who are or were family members of military or civilian Federal employees. These eligibles must meet certain criteria in order to enter your competitive service job. For example, they must have served for at least 18 months in appropriated fund (usually this is excepted service) local hire employment. They must have received a fully successful or better performance rating, and must be fully qualified for your job. These appointments may only be made within 3 years from the employee's return to the U.S. from the overseas duty tour.

f. Other special authorities. Your CPO has detailed information on other legitimate--but infrequently used--means of hiring "special" eligibles. You might consider using one of these methods to fill your job, as they allow you to contribute to social goals. Some of these are employment of rehabilitated offenders; the mentally restored; and disabled veterans who complete certain types of VA training. Still more sources of candidates exist, and are infrequently used because the numbers of eligible candidates are small compared to other sources. Some of these include former Peace Corps or ACTION volunteers and former Canal Zone Merit System Employees. While you probably wouldn't specifically identify one of these more uncommon candidate pools for your vacancy, the CPO may include one of these eligibles for your consideration.

Chapter 5

Student Employment

Usually, you will set up a specific job for the purpose of employing students rather than regularly using this as a source of candidates for your standard vacancies. Be aware of the various programs, however, and consider using them to supplement your other positions. Some of the more frequently used programs are highlighted here.

a. Cooperative education (Co-op) programs. The Co-op programs blend academic study and related work experience for students who are in a high school vocational co-op program, or in associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree programs. Students must attend high school or college on a full-time basis, interspersed with periods of work on an excepted service appointment. Usually, the college students receive promotions before the program is over. After attainment of their degree, college students may be converted to career-conditional appointments to a position which is technical, professional, or administrative and for which the graduate has been trained and qualifies. Definite trine periods of work must have been met before this may be accomplished, and a job vacancy must exist. Plan ahead carefully to ensure a permanent position is available when the student graduates. Then he or she may be converted to career-conditional and retained in the Army work force.

b. Student volunteer service allows students to become exposed to the work environment and acquire “hands-on” educational experience. An agreement with the educational institution must be worked out by the CPO. These students are not paid, and are not considered to be Federal employees. This program does not lead to conversion of any sort but you may wish to use it to allow a student to develop an interest in an occupation found in your workplace.

c. The Federal Junior Fellowship Program allows you to provide employment to outstanding high school seniors who need earnings to attend college. These students work summers and during vacations throughout their college years, and may be converted to career-conditional appointments after they attain their degree. Special manpower controls apply to this program.

d. The Stay-In-School Program permits needy students to work in Federal agencies so that they can continue their education without financial pressures. These students perform routine work, and may work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session. They may work full-time when school is closed. This does not lead to conversion to a permanent appointment. These employees are also subject to special manpower controls.

Chapter 6

How You Can Help

While the CPO is responsible for many of the procedural aspects of filling jobs, you play an important role because of your knowledge of your job needs. Following are some actions you can take which will hasten the hiring process and improve it at the same time.

a. Accompany CPO representatives on recruiting visits. If your profession is engineering, for example, you can communicate effectively with engineering students on matters of interest to them. If you have an intern job to fill in a particular career field, go to colleges where candidates are being recruited so that you can tell the whole story about this field. You can recruit informally, too, by telling acquaintances of the benefits of government employment.

b. Notify the personnel office as soon as you become aware of a new mission to be assigned to your organization, a projected retirement or a pending resignation, transfer or any other circumstance which may require the recruitment of additional or replacement employees. Work closely with the CPO throughout the recruitment and selection process. Remember that the CPO specialist cannot set a hire date until after all required pre-appointment processes are completed.

c. Serve as a subject matter expert for determining job requirements. Keep a good sense of perspective so that needed qualifications are identified no more, and no less.

d. Serve on rating and ranking panels when asked. Your subject matter knowledge will contribute greatly to the candidate evaluation process.

e. Become more knowledgeable of hiring sources (this pamphlet is a good start) and learn which produce high quality candidates, including minority and female candidates. Don't leave all recruiting decisions in the hands of CPO right up until selection time.

f. Take some risks. Hiring a student or a handicapped person will require extra effort from you initially, but the rewards are considerable for you and for them. Remember that at least once, someone gave you a break.

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